1:Du Bois E-5 (1938-1939) 1944
OF5 Alor OF5

§34 woman's attendant is preferably her mother, but here too expediency will dictate the choice of midwife. Actual birth occurs in the privy-corridor just off the living room, where a group of interested kin, both male and female, may have gathered to chat while awaiting the birth. Children too form part of this group.

Meanwhile the mother sits with her legs spread and rugs at the rafters overhead to help her in her labor. The midwife sits directly opposite with her legs outside of, and parallel to, those of the mother. Between them lies a piece of pandanus mat on which the child is placed as soon as it is born. The midwife cleans the child with the thick juice squeezed beforehand from banana bark. When the afterbirth is ejected, the midwife measures a length of the umbilical cord reaching to the child's knees and severs it with a sharp sliver of bamboo. The end of the cord still attached to the child's body is coiled up on its abdomen. The birth fluids have meanwhile drained through the floor boards to the pigpen below. The afterbirth is placed in an old areca basket and is left to disintegrate in the bamboo thicket on the village boundary. A stillborn child is treated like the placenta. It is interesting that this type of disposal parallels that for human heads and spirit-bird bundles when their ceremonial treatment has been completed.*

§33 §40 After completing birth the mother picks up the child, wraps it in the softest piece of woven or bark cloth available, and joins the group of friends and visitors in the living room. People present suggest various names; those of maternal and paternal grandparents are preferred. If a child begins to urinate or to nurse after a name is suggested, that is the one adopted. Given names are feminine or masculine. For further identification both men and women carry their father's given name as surname. They never take the stepfather's name.

§44 One gathers the impression that birth is considered an easy and casual procedure and that problems in beginning nursing are not a matter of formal concern. This does not mean that difficulties never occur, but it does indicate that the society has not emphasized such difficulties. There is also no emphasis on modesty in connection with birth, although on other occasions there are strong feelings about exposing the genitals. Birth is definitely women's business, but men are not completely excluded.

In this connection, and despite my emphasis on the casualness of the procedure, it is an interesting contradiction that many men feel a certain disgust if they are offered food prepared by a woman who has served recently as a midwife. When I discussed this matter one day

* See pages 130–31 and 180–81 for descriptions of these ceremonies.

1:Du Bois E-5 (1938-1939) 1944
OF5 Alur OF5

Also, men are frequently addressed or referred to as "the father of So-and-so." This modified teknonymy is rarer for women. That it should occur in a group where patrilocal residence predominates gives it perhaps a greater significance than if it occurred in a society with matrilocal residence. Children, therefore, are important in giving status to adults. They are valued also, as the next chapter indicates, because they give the death feasts, which mean postmortem prestige for the parents. However, it is quite possible that children may have a value in adult eyes from which the children themselves do not benefit.

There was one case of a child prophet, a little girl of about six called Koleti, who was able to sway the community for several weeks.

One day Koleti's mother sent her to fetch a spoon. The child did not return and could not be found all day. Her father and paternal grandfather, who were on a dunning trip to a distant village, said they saw her appear on the trail and then fade into thin air. That evening the mother heard a rustling in the loft, asked who was there, and heard Koleti answer, "We are. We are coming down." And the child was discovered hiding in the loft.

Some weeks later the mother and father were both in a village about a day's journey away. Again the child appeared and this time ordered them to return to their own home. She then disappeared. Actually, the child had been left at home in the care of a sickly youth of about twenty, who reported that she had disappeared from home at the time her parents believed she spoke to them in the distant village. The child was by now the center of attention in the community, and adults suggested to her that she was in contact with a Good Being and was on the way to becoming one herself. Koleti was quick to play on this suggestion. She ordered a special house built in which she would live alone until the Good Being and his wife arrived to care for her. The house was erected and adults assured me that it had miraculously grown taller overnight. Koleti ordered that an all-night dance be held, saying her supernatural friends would arrive at dawn. When they failed to arrive, interested adults, including her father and his cousin Malelaka (see Malelaka's autobiography), were quick to make excuses and say the advent was merely delayed.

For days Koleti continued to be the center of attention. At a feast she fell ill and everyone crowded around her in concern. Her rationalization was that a small playmate had rubbed his greasy hands on her. Her pronouncements were all in the traditional pattern connected with the advent of a Good Being. She could not attend death feasts, all

1:Du Bois E-5 (1938-1939) 1944
OF5 Alor OF5

were feeding the souls, my familiar spirit Lomani came. The dead people sent two tiny spiders, which hung down in front of me, and my familiar spirit saw them. I caught them and placed one on the hollow of my throat and one on the hollow of Lonmobi's throat. They were the souls of unborn children, and they entered our bodies. Then my familiar spirit said to Lonmobi, "You will be pregnant first, and then my mother [the informant] will be pregnant." We went to a spring and dammed up a place to make a small pool. We pounded the necessary leaves and tied them on our abdomens with vines. Then we cut the vines and let them fall into the pool. Shortly after that we were both pregnant. Lonmobi's child died. That was the time I bore Maieta [her son, now about fourteen].

April 26, 1939

Last night I dreamed that Maitama and Kolmai [his wife] went to Fungwati. As they came back over Manikameng [a ridge above the village], I saw them carrying a branch of a tree, holding it up in their hands. I asked them, "If that is areca, can we chew it?" They said, "Oh, if we hold this in our hands, our necks will get long. When we peel it, it is slippery." [The informant did not know what this meant.] When we approached their house, we saw that many people were gathered there. We looked back toward Manikameng and it was just hanging in air. [Stop.] I looked behind us and saw there were many albino rats with nice patterns in their fur. Some had no fur on their heads, so that you could see the bare skin. I said, "Those are evil rats; evil spirits are in them. Formerly we were afraid, but now the nonya is here and we are not afraid any more. We shall go tell her to bring her gun, and we shall shoot them." Then I woke up.

What shall I talk about? [I answered that she should talk of whatever entered her mind.]

I gave birth to Kolaka [her daughter, about three years old]. While she was still small, she cried all night long and would not stop. Then Lopada said, "If your child cries all the time, give her the name Kolaka and she will stop." [Stop.] I said to people, "Tell me what kind of a person my mother was. Was she light or dark? [Kolaka had very light skin.] I was still small when she died, and I did not see her." People said she had scabies. That night I dreamed that my mother sat near my feet and that she did indeed have scabies. My mother was tickling my child because she was not named after her. This was why the child cried constantly. I went to Lopada with a chicken, and she said to change the